

# STATE OF MARYLAND

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## **The Maryland Council for New Americans**

### Meeting Minutes\*

January 13, 2009, 3pm

Banneker-Douglass Museum, Annapolis

#### Opening Remarks and Introductions

Secretary Tom Perez indicated that the work of the council was very important, and likened its charge to that of the Governor's recent commission on Smart Growth. He expects to have a report that is clear and substantive in content. He introduced County Executive Leggett. County Executive Ike Leggett thanks participants for being part of the group. Explained that the Working groups are charged with the genuine work of the Council, and the council has a whole is to hear the reports and consider adoption of the suggestions of the working groups.

#### Overview of the Council and its Duties

Adam Ortiz introduced himself and Angela Lagdameo as the primary staffers for the Council. He reviewed the legal obligations of the council, citing the Governor's executive order, particularly to review policies and procedures and submit a written report eight months from the signature of the order, August 3. He reviewed the working group structure as outlined in the order. Also spoke of the work of other states in its initiatives on new Americans, namely Illinois, Massachusetts and New Jersey. Emphasized that Maryland's effort was unique in two ways - the breadth of its scope and diversity of its participants. Rather than just focusing on citizenship, the initiative will also look at the touchstones of the American dream - workforce development, mainstream financial services and planning, and access to their government at all levels. The MD effort is a unique partnership of stakeholders, of which a majority are non-governmental-more truly representing our state. Also, government does not have all the answers or resources to address pressing problems, but needs the input and investment of employers, religious institutions, philanthropy, social service organizations, and diverse ethnic representation.

Angela Lagdameo from the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives provided an overview of the membership of the Council and presented the operational support plan for the Council. The Maryland Council for New Americans will have a website, [www.newamericans.maryland.gov](http://www.newamericans.maryland.gov) where bios, resources, and the Working Groups' plans will be centralized. Applications to Working Groups were provided for the community and are available through Lagdameo/Ortiz and on the website. Logistic

follow-up: all CVs of Members of the Council should be sent to Secretary Hitchcock directly or to Lagdameo.

Secretary Perez asked if there were other working groups that should be established. Irene Lee offered to head a group of philanthropists to examine alternatives for funding recommendations from the group. Rabbi Weinblatt suggested that the group be highly concerned with communications and public relations, that negativity often crowds out data and facts of the contributions and opportunities that immigrants afford society.

#### Presentation and Discussion: Maryland's New Americans

Karina Fortuny, researcher with the The Urban Institute provided a presentation on their report "The Integration of Immigrants and their Families in Maryland: The contributions of immigrant workers to the Economy." The presentation highlighted the high levels of education among immigrants, higher than the native population, yet high levels of limited English proficiency. Also pointed out the relatively high percentages of African and black immigrants and low percentages of Mexican immigrants, and that Hispanic, black, Asian and White immigrants have almost equal percentage share of the immigrant population. All of these data points are highly unique to Maryland. The full powerpoint presentation is available on the MCNA website.

A number of questions and comments arose from Ms. Fortuny's presentation, including: breakdown of the data for gender; more study and understanding of highly educated immigrants in low paying jobs; comparisons to other states of other policies and laws; who are the 'gatekeepers' that help groups come and settle in Maryland; and more information highlighting successful immigrant job training programs, particularly the Foreign Nurses Training Program in Montgomery County with Holy Cross and Washington Adventist Hospitals. Ms. Fortuny also offered that the Urban Institute would be issuing a follow up report in the Spring focusing more in on the impact of children and families.

#### Establishment of Report Timeline and Working Groups

All participants were asked to sign in and indicate which working group they would like to sign up for. Angela Lagdameo offered to circulate the working group signup sheet to members if they would like to refer experts to the group.

County Executive Leggett thanked the group for their participation, urged the working groups to begin their work in February, and that schedules will be coordinated for the next meeting of the whole. Secretary Perez complimented the County Executive on running a prompt meeting that ended early.

\*These minutes were prepared by staff and posted in the interest of providing prompt information sharing, however, they have not been approved by the Council as the official minutes.